

After a lot of hard work from Senators KAINE and YOUNG, as well as Chairman MENENDEZ and Ranking Member RISCH, this is the week the Senate will begin the process to end the legal authority that started the Iraq war two decades ago.

Every year we keep these AUMFs on the books, and every year we keep them on the books is another chance for future administrations to abuse or misuse them. War powers belong in the hands of Congress, and that means we have a responsibility to prevent future Presidents from exploiting these AUMFs to bumble us into a new Middle East conflict.

Americans are tired of endless wars in the Middle East, and we owe it to them and to our veterans and their families to repeal the Iraq war AUMF.

So thank you—thank you—to the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for their work, especially Chairman MENENDEZ and Ranking Member RISCH, and thank you again to Senators KAINE and YOUNG for their work spearheading this legislation.

The Iraq war has formally been over for more than 10 years. The reality on the ground has long since changed. So the laws on the books must change too. Repealing this AUMF will in no way hinder our national defense, and it represents a positive step forward in our relationship with the Iraqi Government.

I am pleased this effort has been thoroughly bipartisan. President Biden has voiced his support for the measure. The House passed a similar bill a few years ago with strong support from both Democrats and Republicans. Here in the Senate, the bill was reported out of committee with a 13-to-8 vote. So I thank my colleagues on both sides for allowing this bill to proceed.

AUKUS

Mr. President, now, on AUKUS, yesterday, in San Diego, President Biden joined his counterparts from the United Kingdom and Australia, and he announced the next steps in a historic arrangement known as AUKUS.

The President's announcement is a bold and generational investment to create a new fleet of nuclear-powered submarines to counter President Xi and the Chinese Communist Party's influence in the Pacific. And AUKUS, in general, will be a critical part of ensuring stability in the region. I applaud President Biden for recognizing the need to forge ahead on this multinational partnership.

During my recent codel overseas, our discussions with world leaders stressed the need for the United States to continue deepening our security arrangements with our longstanding partners. At the same time, I made it clear that we also must expand and grow relationships with countries like India, which will play a major role in shaping global security and stability in the 21st century.

And just like AUKUS serves as a bulwark in the Pacific, so will the quad

powers of the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, working together for democracy and stability in Asia.

The United States will only stay ahead of President Xi and the Chinese Communist Party if we can bring other democracies of the world to partner with us—from India, Australia, Japan, the UK, and so many others. And India and Australia can be very important partners in containing President Xi and the CCP.

So I remain committed to deepening our existing relationships and finding opportunities to build new ones, and I look forward to working on a bipartisan basis to advance them.

GUN SAFETY

Mr. President, now, on the President's Executive order on guns, today, in Monterrey Park, CA—where, sadly, unfortunately, tragically, a gunman murdered 11 people in January during Lunar New Year celebrations—President Biden will announce a new Executive order to strengthen background checks and other commonsense gun safety measures.

I commend President Biden for taking this much needed step to fight the scourge of gun violence in our country.

After gunmen massacred dozens of people in Buffalo and Uvalde last year, the Senate defied the NRA and passed a bipartisan, commonsense, and life-saving gun safety bill for the first time in decades. It was the first step Congress took since the Brady bill in 1994, which I was proud to author and lead passage of, which mandated Federal background checks on firearms.

Last year's bipartisan safety bill was a good, long-overdue step of progress, but we must do more. Gun violence remains a devastating sickness that festers deep within the heart of our Nation.

Democrats stand ready to keep working together to combat violence, and we hope a good number of our Republican colleagues will join us once again.

I hope my colleagues on the other side can free themselves from the vice grip of the NRA and the MAGA wing of the Republican Party and work with Democrats to pass more gun safety legislation in this Congress.

INSULIN

Mr. President, now, on insulin and the CBO, it is another important day for millions of Americans who rely on insulin. Following Eli Lilly's recent announcement that they are capping insulin costs at \$35 a month, Novo Nordisk announced today that they are following suit, slashing prices on some insulin products by as much as 75 percent.

It is good news that these enormous drug pharmaceutical companies are waking up to the injustice of price gouging of Americans who rely on insulin daily. There is no justification—none—for having insulin cost \$300 or \$500 or more a month. People who need that insulin for their health, for their safety, for their lives can't afford it

anymore, and this lowering of price is very important.

As we all know, we Senate Democrats took a major step in righting this wrong by capping insulin costs at \$35 a month for Americans on Medicare. It is my hope that both parties can build on this good work with commonsense bipartisan legislation to extend that \$35 cap to all Americans.

Lowering insulin costs is a good policy that everyone on both sides of the aisle should get behind. This is not a Democratic issue. This is not a Republican issue. It is something that affects people in every city, in every State and is an American issue.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE

Mr. President, finally, today, CBO released a letter confirming what most of us already knew: The Republican plan to balance the budget in 10 years and keep the Trump tax cuts is impossible—mathematically impossible—without making cuts to Social Security, Medicare, defense, and veterans' benefits.

To balance the budget in 10 years with no new revenues, while somehow leaving Medicare, Social Security, veterans' programs, and defense unscathed, Republicans would have to cut 86 percent from every other Federal program. That means nearly obliterating funds for Medicaid, for food and housing support, border security, healthcare, infrastructure.

This leaves Americans with a profound worry about their benefits, and it leaves Americans with some big questions down the road. If Republicans can't reach their goals without forcing severe cuts down Americans' throats, then what exactly are they planning to do?

To date, Republicans have refused to talk straight with the American people about budget cuts.

Speaker MCCARTHY, today is March 14. Show us your plan.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

MITCH MCCONNELL

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it seems a little unusual to follow Senator SCHUMER because usually Senator MCCONNELL is next, and we certainly understand why he is not here today. He is in recovery from a fall that he experienced last week. We wish him the very best and hope he is back very soon.

BUDGET

Mr. President, there is an old saying that there aren't a lot of atheists in foxholes.

In my experience, there aren't a lot of unyielding, uncompromising, fiscally conservative, so-called budget hawks when a disaster hits. It gets personal. When tornadoes rip across your State or hurricanes devastate your community, when a cold snap takes down the electric grid in your State, when blazing heat sets off raging wildfires, when a freight train hauling

toxic chemicals derails and explodes into a raging fireball, you don't find a platoon of Ayn Rand-quoting ideologues that really come to the scene and want to be heard.

People want to see FEMA and other government Agencies on the scene helping as quickly as possible. They want to know that their government is there to help when it is needed.

When it gets right down to it, we Americans face a fundamental choice. Do we want a Federal Government that is there when we need a hand or do we want a government that will preach to us: Sorry. You are on your own, Mr. Taxpayer?

Do we want a government that is far-sighted enough to plant the American flag on new industries and inventions for the future or do we plan on leaving these transformative discoveries—the Moonshots of this century—to China?

President Biden told us last week where he stands on these basic questions when he proposed his budget to Congress. It is a plan that protects Social Security, strengthens Medicare, and adds 25 years of additional solvency to the Medicare Program.

The President's budget plan gives working families help with the basics—affordable, reliable healthcare coverage, including savings on prescription drugs, which the Democratic leader just noted when it came to insulin.

The President's budget invests in affordable housing and quality childcare. It invests in community colleges to educate skilled workers that our economy desperately needs and helps students land good-paying jobs and get a start on a 4-year degree.

The President's budget restores the enhanced child tax credit, which helped cut poverty among children in the United States in half when we included it during the pandemic. We are, in fact, the richest Nation on Earth, yet, shamefully, we have the highest child poverty rate among all advanced nations. If the superwealthy can claim tax breaks on their yachts, surely we can find affordable tax credits to help working families care for their kids.

President Reagan called another part of the Tax Code—the earned income tax credit—the best anti-poverty program ever invented. President Biden is proposing to make the earned income tax credit for childless workers permanent to lift millions of low-wage Americans out of poverty. Isn't that something that should be our aspiration in this country as a high priority? If you say you believe in the dignity of work, if you say you respect men and women who take the bus early in the morning, working maybe two or even three jobs to make ends meet, here is a chance to show our respect for work—support the earned income tax credit.

President Biden's budget includes continued funding for a Cancer Moonshot to end cancer as we know it. What family in America hasn't known the heartache personally or among friends or family members and frequently the

financial devastation of cancer? Not many.

I hope people not only embrace the administration's Cancer Moonshot but will continue the 5-percent real growth in medical research—including the National Institutes of Health—that this Senate has supported on a bipartisan basis for nearly a decade.

I went out to National Institutes of Health about 10 years ago, and I met with one of the greatest living Americans—and I say that without reservation—Dr. Francis Collins. He was the head of the NIH under Presidents of both political parties and did a remarkable job. Among other things, he was one of the key elements and contributors in mapping the human genome. That has just transformed a whole area of medical research.

I said to Dr. Collins when I went out to see him: I want to help the National Institutes of Health with medical research. I know there was a time when a bipartisan coalition doubled your budget.

That coalition should be remembered on the floor of the Senate. It was Arlen Specter, a Republican from Pennsylvania; Tom Harkin, a Democrat from Iowa; and John Porter, a Republican Congressman from the North Shore of the State of Illinois. The three of them got together and doubled the budget for the National Institutes of Health.

I said to Dr. Collins: I want to do something that helps you. What can I do?

He said: Work to give us 5 percent real growth every single year.

Do you know why?

He said: Our researchers aren't sure you are going to be there next year, Congress. They are not sure you are going to fund their projects. So they don't follow through to the end, as they should. They lose patience and end up in some other place. If you can give them a reliable budget each year for medical research, they will continue their research and find dramatic breakthroughs.

In the words of Dr. Collins, he said: We can light up the scoreboard if you will make that commitment.

I came back here and talked to a number of my colleagues. I talked to Roy Blunt—now retired—from the State of Missouri. I talked to PATTY MURRAY—of course still serving here and now chairing the Senate Appropriations Committee—from the State of Washington. I spoke to Lamar Alexander, a Republican from Tennessee. The four of us got together and put together a bipartisan team, and we achieved that goal of 5 percent real growth for 8 years. We went from \$30 billion at the NIH to \$40 billion at the NIH, and it makes a big difference. It made a big difference when the pandemic struck.

We are doing things now that really do improve the likelihood of finding cures for many diseases, and I want to continue with that. I am glad to report that President Biden's budget does just

that. That is the kind of commitment we need to make in the Senate on a bipartisan basis for at least another decade.

The President's plan also strengthens border security and the U.S. immigration system. There is no excuse why we have not rewritten our terrible immigration laws, our broken immigration system, in almost 30 years—30 years, since Ronald Reagan was President. That was the last time we ever agreed on any significant changes in immigration policy.

The world has changed dramatically. America has changed, and we still are laboring under the old laws, which do not meet today's needs. We need to do more. It is not enough to just appropriate money for border security; we need a plan that makes sense, that reflects our values as a nation of immigrants, which reflects the values we share when it comes to our future and recognizes the reality that many of these immigrants seeking to be part of the United States are going to make a significant difference not only in the lives of their families but in the lives of Americans all over.

These are people who have amazing energy and determination. I have yet to meet one of these new immigrants in my State of Illinois who is asking me where the welfare office is. They are asking me where they can go to work, and they are ready to roll up their sleeves and start working immediately. They are wonderful, ingenious, innovative, hard-charging people, and we need them in our future. It is time to wake up to the reality.

Having a system of orderly immigration in this country is the best thing to make sure we keep our labor pool strong and the best innovation available in entrepreneurial pursuits.

The President's budget also increases defense spending to ensure that we can deter any threats from China, Russia, Iran, or any other country that threatens us. It maintains our commitment to the brave fighters and people of Ukraine who are on the frontline of freedom in today's world.

I just read over the weekend where the Governor from the State of Florida really questioned whether we ought to be doing anything to help the people in Ukraine. I couldn't believe it when I read it, but I guess in politics, almost anything can happen.

To think that we would turn our backs now on these brave Ukrainians who for more than a year have fought off Vladimir Putin and his thugs invading their country in an unprovoked invasion is just, in my mind, mindless. If we can't stand up for the values of the Ukrainian people and stop this kind of ruthless, war-crime behavior by Vladimir Putin, shame on us. The United States needs to stand with the people of Ukraine, who are literally giving their lives on a daily basis for the future of their nation.

I might add, the President's budget honors Americans' commitment to our

military veterans, boosting investments in veterans' health and funding the PACT Act, which is going to allow those who were injured in service to our country by burn pits, for example, an opportunity to get the best quality medical care and to care for veterans sickened by service-connected exposure to toxic hazards.

This is important: According to the White House, if you earn less than \$400,000 a year, the President's budget won't raise your taxes one dollar. That bears repeating. If your family earns less than \$400,000 a year, your taxes under the President's budget will not go up one penny. He made that promise when he ran, and he has stuck with it.

The President pays for this plan by making the ultrawealthy, over \$400,000, and big corporations finally pay their fair share. When 55 of the largest corporations in America paid no taxes—zero—last year, that is not a conservative precept; that is a big con, and it is not fair.

Now, we know the President's plan is just an opening bid of what promises to be a long, complicated budget process. We will undoubtedly see alternative proposals from both sides of the aisle. That is the nature of negotiations and debate. But it does take two sides.

I have to join with the Democratic leader in the Senate to say: Speaker MCCARTHY, where is your plan? Where is your budget? You talk big, but you don't produce anything. We want to see it.

During the last administration, our Republican colleagues voted to add nearly \$8 trillion to the national debt. From the last administration was the single-largest increase in America's national debt than any other previous President. That is nearly one-quarter of all the debt accumulated since the beginning of this Nation. It happened in the last 4 years under the previous President. Most of the \$8 trillion in new debt was piled on before the pandemic. A lot of it was spent on tax cuts for the wealthiest people in America and the corporations they own.

Now they say they want to eliminate the deficit in a decade. As Senator SCHUMER said earlier, it just doesn't pass the laugh test, let alone the math test.

What is the plan to do that? Put it on paper. Put it on the table, and let's see it, Speaker MCCARTHY. Are you going to cut education? healthcare? medical research? aid for veterans? FEMA?

The President's plan is on the table. Republicans have a responsibility to come up with a credible, serious counteroffer, not just bumper sticker slogans.

EQUAL PAY DAY

Mr. President, on a related note, it was 60 years ago that John Kennedy, as President, signed the Equal Pay Act. The law was simple. Here is what it said: Women should not be paid less than men for the same work—simple. Yet, 60 years later, we are still not there—60 years.

Today is Equal Pay Day in America. Let me tell you what that means. This is the day when the average American woman will finally earn as much as the average man did last year. In other words, on average, it takes women 15½ months to earn as much as men do in America in 12 months.

The pay gap persists despite the law I told you about. Here is the reality: Women in America are still paid less than men even when they do exactly the same job. On average, a woman in America makes 82 cents for every dollar a man makes. This means that women who work full time year-round lose up to \$400,000 over the course of their working lives. When you include part-time and seasonal workers, women make only 77 cents for every dollar a man makes. The pay gap gets even wider for women of color, who lose up to \$1 million over the course of their working lives. And less pay during your working years means less retirement income, we all know.

Apologists offer all kinds of explanations and justifications, but the persistent pay gap among men and women is sexism, plain and simple. And it doesn't just hurt women; it hurts their families, who depend on them. Additionally, while men's wages rise throughout their lives, women's wages rise more slowly, and the gap widens if they have children.

President Biden's budget proposal contains a number of important measures that will help working families make ends meet. It includes affordable childcare—what a high priority that is for every working parent—and paid family and medical leave so that women, who are also primary caregivers in most families, don't have to stop working to care for a loved one.

But those measures, as necessary as they are, will not close the inexcusable pay gap for women. We need to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, closing loopholes in equal pay after finally giving women the tools they need to hold employers accountable if they break equal pay laws.

House and Senate Democrats reintroduced this essential legislation last week. I want to thank my colleague Senator PATTY MURRAY, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, in particular for her leadership on this issue.

We are committed to passing the Paycheck Fairness Act, and we need Republicans to make it happen. If they believe in fairness, as I think we all do, if you care about the financial security of working families, stand with us, and let's finally pass this bill.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oklahoma.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I often come to the floor of the Senate to talk about one particular item as I want to be able to walk through what we are going to do to be able to solve it.

Honestly, today, it is a little different for me. In some ways, I feel a lit-

tle bit like Will Rogers with his statement, the famous Oklahoman, who said that all I really know is what I learned from reading the newspapers, which is an alibi for my ignorance.

Today, I want to just be able to talk about random stories that I have read lately that are kind of in the "you can't make this stuff up" column. It has been frustrating for me.

Right now, 7 in 10 Americans feel like America is on the wrong track—7 in 10. I mean, I don't know why, but they just feel like something is not going right, like things are out of control. It has been frustrating to me to be able to go through so many news stories lately and to be able to say: If I put this in front of 7 in 10 or maybe 9 in 10 Americans, they would say, "Why are we doing this as a nation?"

Now, I understand a lot of the issues we face are complicated. Yet, quite frankly, some of these issues are not complicated; they are common sense; they become political only in this city. But for most of America, it is just not that complicated. Sometimes I just get frustrated with the language and the things that are coming out of not just the administration but with the things that are happening in our Federal Government right now that, I think, just need to be called out and for us to say: Let's as a Senate sit down and talk about some of these complicated issues. Instead of knee-jerk political reactions, let's try to solve some of these hard things because we are currently talking about it, and things are going sideways instead of things being solved.

Over the past 5 days, we have watched the collapse of the Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank—a big bank in San Francisco and a much smaller bank in New York. For both of them, we have now had the FDIC step in, and they are going to save every single person in the bank and make sure they are whole. Now, that is very different than cyclical. Most Americans know you are insured up to \$250,000, but the Biden administration stepped in and said: Oh, no. Everyone is going to be kept 100-percent whole.

The comment that has come out of it has been: Well, we are going to make sure no taxpayers have to be able to cover this bill. Then, if you listen closely, the very next statement is that it is going to come from an assessment on the banks instead.

Let me tell you what that means.

As one of the wealthiest banks in America, which has mostly millionaires who actually bank there—in fact, to show that, for 90 percent of the depositors in Silicon Valley Bank, their deposits exceed \$250,000—OK?—90 percent. That is not normal for a bank. For that bank in San Francisco, all of their depositors are going to be bailed out, and the way that they are going to be bailed out is they are going to put a special—what they are calling—assessment on banks across the country.

So let me tell you what is happening in the next few months.